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ABSTRACT

In order to determine the actual and ideal role of the cooperative education director as perceived by the director, immediate supervisors, and faculty, a random sample was drawn from 474 two-year colleges with cooperative education programs. Responses were received from 73 directors (77%), 54 supervisors (84%), and 38 faculty members (66%). The questionnaire asked respondents to rank 44 role behavior activity statements in terms of their actual and ideal importance. In terms of the directors' actual role, it was found that supervisors believed that directors were more involved with recruitment and selection of employers than did directors; and that faculty perceived directors as emphasizing proposal preparation, attendance at meetings and conferences, and student assignment more than directors believed was the case. On 40 of the 44 activity statements, the three groups expressed similar ideas on ideal behavior; however, supervisors would ideally involve directors with employer evaluation, conducting surveys of prospective students, and with the affirmative action role more than the directors' perceptions indicated would be ideal. The mean ideal score was significantly higher than the mean actual score on 36 of the 44 activity statements, indicating that directors were not satisfied with their own performance; however, perceptions held by directors as to their ideal role may be unrealistic in terms of the amount of time available to the director. (MB)

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THE ROLE OF THE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION DIRECTOR IN THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE

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Cooperative education has increasingly become an important part of the two-year college educational program. The concept of cooperative education (blending theory with practice) is a natural outgrowth of the two-year college philosophy of meeting the needs of students served by the college through the use of community resources. Research concerning the role of the director of cooperative education has not been undertaken prior to the 1977-1978 study completed at Utah State University. The purpose of this article is to report on the results of the study. The specific purposes of the study which will be reported include: (1) the determination of the actual and ideal role of the two-year cooperative education director as perceived by directors, their immediate supervisors, and faculty; (2) the determination of the differences in role perception, actual and ideal, among directors, their immediate supervisors, and faculty; and (3) the determination of the differences between the actual and ideal role of two-year cooperative education directors as perceived by directors.

Sampling Procedures and Questionnaire Returns

Three reference groups were utilized to determine the role of the two-year cooperative education director: (1) directors; (2) their immediate supervisors; and (3) faculty who actively participated in the colleges' cooperative education program. The subjects for the study were drawn from the 474 two-year colleges listed in the 1976 Cooperative Education Directory. A 20 percent random sample (95 directors) was drawn from this

population. Table 1 presents a summary of the percentage of questionnaires returned for each of the three reference groups.

Table 1

Returns of Directors, Supervisors, & Faculty

	Directors		Supervisors		Faculty	
Two-year Colleges	(73)	76.8%	(54)	84.2%	(38)	55.5%

Research Questionnaire

The questionnaire completed by directors, supervisors, and faculty contained 44 role behavior activity statements dealing with the role of the cooperative education director. These statements were determined through a review of the cooperative education literature as well as the use of a panel of nationally known cooperative education experts.

Actual and Ideal Role of Directors

For descriptive purposes the arithmetic means of all 44 role behavior activity statements (actual and ideal) were calculated. These means were ranked by individual reference groups from 1 through 44 with a ranking of 1 assigned to the role activity with the greatest amount of actual or ideal emphasis. Because of space limitations, this article does not report the rank ordering of all 44 role behavior statements, but rather presents the top 15 as reported by all three reference groups. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and rank by reference groups for the top 15 ideal role behavior statements as reported by two-year directors.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank by Reference Group for Top 15 Ideal Role Behavior Statements Two-year Institutions

Role Defining Groups and Statements	Ideal Role Mean	S.D.	Rank
Listening to and encouraging ideas to improve the functioning of cooperative education.			
Directors	3.69	.60	1
Supervisors	3.66	.58	3
Faculty	3.58	.85	1
Developing, supervising, and administering the policies for cooperative education at the institution.			
Directors	3.62	.62	2
Supervisors	3.53	.68	11
Faculty	3.37	.69	8
Developing and maintaining administrative support of the program.			
Directors	3.59	.64	3
Supervisors	3.41	.72	16
Faculty	3.35	.77	9
Recruiting and selecting employers for participation in the cooperative education programs.			
Directors	3.54	.77	4
Supervisors	3.76	.65	1
Faculty	3.56	.91	2
Developing and reviewing long-range goals for cooperative education.			
Directors	3.53	.63	5
Supervisors	3.53	.62	7
Faculty	3.47	.62	3
Evaluating the cooperative education programs.			
Directors	3.50	.61	6
Supervisors	3.59	.67	5
Faculty	3.40	.69	4
Assisting participating employers in improving the quality of students' job experiences.			
Directors	3.49	.69	7
Supervisors	3.64	.55	4
Faculty	3.33	.85	12

Role Defining Groups and Statements	Ideal Role Mean	S.D.	Rank
Recruiting and selecting students for participation in the cooperative education program.			
Directors	3.49	.90	7
Supervisors	3.68	.60	2
Faculty	3.34	.87	10
Soliciting and maintaining faculty involvement in the program.			
Directors	3.49	.65	7
Supervisors	3.57	.62	9
Faculty	3.21	.73	19
Having contact and conducting personal interviews with students.			
Directors	3.42	.88	10
Supervisors	3.58	.65	7
Faculty	3.38	.89	7
Facilitating communication between faculty and administration not involved in the daily activities of cooperative education.			
Directors	3.41	.73	11
Supervisors	3.44	.73	14
Faculty	3.29	.83	13
Soliciting employers' opinions concerning the quality of the cooperative education program.			
Directors	3.39	.76	12
Supervisors	3.46	.60	13
Faculty	3.15	.78	23
Insuring that there is continuity in terms of employment opportunities for cooperative education students.			
Directors	3.38	.80	13
Supervisors	3.57	.68	9
Faculty	3.26	.90	16
Insuring that coordinators properly match students with available jobs in business, industry, and government.			
Directors	3.38	.90	13
Supervisors	3.50	.80	12
Faculty	3.39	.83	5
Enabling decisions regarding academic credit, grading policy, co-op plans, etc.			
Directors	3.34	.77	15

Role Defining Groups and Statements	Ideal Role Mean	S.D.	Rank
Supervisors	3.31	.67	20
Faculty	3.10	.88	29

Recommendations Related to Role Information

The role information generated by this research study resulted in the descriptive rank ordering of the 44 actual and ideal role behavior statements by all three reference groups. Recommendations related to this descriptive information included the following:

1. The three reference groups' perceptions of what should constitute the ideal role of cooperative education directors could serve as a good reference point (guide) for the evaluation and possible revision of existing job descriptions for the director's position. Since ideal role behavior represents how directors, their supervisors, and faculty perceive directors behaving in a future sense, existing job descriptions should possibly de-emphasize those role behavior activities which were ranked consistently low by all three reference groups and place greater emphasis on those which were ranked consistently high.

2. When hiring directors in the future, institutions may wish to consider utilizing the instrument (44 role behavior statements) generated by this study to measure how prospective candidates rate themselves on each of the 44 role statements in an ideal sense. These ratings could then be compared with the results of this study to determine how closely prospective candidates compare to national averages or to the institution's conception of the position.

Differences in Role Perception Among Reference Groups--Statistical Treatment

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) among the means of the three reference groups (directors, supervisors, and faculty) was used to determine if differences in actual and ideal role perception existed. The analysis of variance was applied to each item (1-44) for the three respondent groups from two-year colleges. Where significant differences at the .05 level appeared, the Scheffe' test was used to locate the pair

or pairs of means accounting for the difference or differences. Scheffe' comparisons were made at the .10 level of significance because of the rigor of the test. Only significant differences between directors and either of the other two groups are presented here.

Two-year Directors (Actual Role)

There were significant differences between reference groups on 40 of the 44 actual role behavior activity statements. Those role behavior statements where significant differences (.05 level) were found include the following:

Role Statement 1. The difference in perception of the actual emphasis given to recruiting and selecting employers was between directors (X = 3.00) and supervisors (X = 3.41). The mean scores of the two groups showed that supervisors believed that directors were more involved with recruitment and selection of employers than did directors.

Role Statement 14. The difference in perception of actual emphasis given to preparing proposals was between directors (X = 2.81) and faculty (X = 3.43). Group means showed that faculty perceived directors as emphasizing proposal preparation considerably more than did directors.

Role Statement 16. The difference in perception of attendance at state and national meetings by cooperative education directors was between directors (X = 2.56) and faculty (X = 2.93). The mean scores of the two groups showed that faculty believed that directors emphasize attendance at meetings and conferences more than directors actually believe was the case.

Role Statement 35. The difference in perception of assigning student coordination responsibilities was between directors (X = 2.38) and faculty (X = 3.04). The mean scores of the two groups show that faculty perceive directors as giving more emphasis to student assignment

than did directors.

Two-year Directors (Ideal Role)

There were no significant differences between the three reference groups on 40 of the 44 ideal role behavior statements. The three reference groups did differ significantly (.05 level) on the following role statements:

Role Statement 26. The difference in perceived ideal emphasis for directors on evaluating employers was between directors (X = 3.31) and supervisors (X = 3.59). Group means show that supervisors would ideally involve directors with employer evaluation more than directors themselves would want to emphasize the role.

Role Statement 34. The difference in perception of faculty involvement was between supervisors and faculty and was only noted here because this study was concerned with disparities between directors and the other respondent groups.

Role Statement 37. The difference in perceived ideal emphasis given to conducting surveys was between directors (X = 2.69) and supervisors (X = 3.16). Supervisors apparently felt that ideally directors should play a greater role in conducting surveys of prospective students and employers.

Role Statement 38. The difference in perceived ideal emphasis given to administering Affirmative Action programs was between directors (X = 2.39) and supervisors (X = 2.81). Again, supervisors apparently felt that ideally the cooperative education director should give more emphasis to the Affirmative Action role than the directors' perceptions indicate would be ideal.

Recommendations for Two-year Colleges

1. There was general congruence in the perceptions of the actual

role of a cooperative education director as perceived by directors, supervisors, and faculty. Respondents agreed on 40 of the 44 actual role behavior statements. Greater congruence might be achieved by making faculty and supervisors more aware of the director's activities. Greater awareness could be achieved through increased communication efforts such as in-service training, workshops, individual consultation, written communication, and job descriptions where none are presently used.

2. There was greater disparity in actual role perceptions between faculty and directors than between supervisors and directors. Supervisors may have more accurate perceptions of the director's role than do faculty members. Again, increased communication with faculty is recommended.

3. There was general congruence (40 of the 44 role behavior statements) in the perception of the ideal role of the cooperative education director as reported by directors, supervisors, and faculty. Where disagreement occurred in responses to the ideal role statements, it was between directors and supervisors. There were no differences reported in the ideal role behavior statements between directors and faculty. Supervisors would apparently prefer to see directors more involved with some of the administrative details of cooperative education. The role behavior statements on which disagreement occurred were related to administration. A cooperative effort between directors and supervisors in determining the role of the director could help to assure greater role congruence.

Differences Between Actual and Ideal Role of Directors as Perceived by Directors

A T-test among correlated means was used to compare mean responses of the actual to the ideal role of directors. The level of significance was set at .01.

Two-year Directors (Actual versus Ideal)

A significant difference (.01) was found on 36 of the 44 role behavior

activity statements for two-year directors. On every role behavior statement where a significant difference was found the ideal exceeded the perceived actual.

Role statements where there was no significant difference for two-year directors between actual and ideal role behavior included the following:

Statement Number	Role Behavior Statement
6	Preparing routine correspondence and other paperwork required for the day-to-day operation of the cooperative education program.
11	Administering the budget and making financial reports.
14	Preparing state and federal proposals as required for program funding.
25	Establishing and maintaining a student record-keeping system in the cooperative education office.
28	Developing and reviewing college catalog information related to cooperative education.
32	Recruiting and selecting students for participation in the cooperative education program.
41	Enabling decisions regarding academic credit, grading policy, co-op plans (alternating, parallel, extended day), etc.
44	Having contact and conducting personal interviews with students.

Recommendations for Two-year Directors

1. The mean ideal score was significantly higher than the mean actual score on 36 of the 44 role behavior activity statements. On every role behavior statement where a significant difference was found, the ideal exceeded the perceived actual. Two-year directors appear to not be satisfied with their own performance on these activities, or also tend to be very idealistic in terms of their present job performance. It is

recommended that two-year directors examine these 36 role behavior activity statements and decide whether they should place greater emphasis on these activities, striving for more uniformity between the actual and ideal role.

2. That there was no statistical difference between the actual and ideal role behavior mean scores on 8 of the 44 role behavior activity statements indicates that two-year directors apparently are functioning close to the ideal on these 8 role behavior activities. No increase or decrease in emphasis is recommended for these 8 role behavior activities.

3. The perceptions held by directors concerning what should constitute the ideal role of cooperative education directors may be unrealistic in terms of the amount of time available to the director. If directors perceive that it is desirable for them to increase their emphasis on a particular role activity, then a corresponding decrease in emphasis may have to occur in other role behavior activities. This implies that cooperative education directors will either have to know how to more effectively utilize the time they have available, cut back or stop performing certain activities, or increase the amount of time they have available to perform these activities. Specific recommendations which may help in addressing this potential time problem include the following:

A. Directors could maintain a daily log of their activities and the time required for each. Such a record would provide directors with the data required to analyze what they do, the importance of these activities, and the amount of time they spend performing them. An analysis of this nature would allow directors to make more logical decisions regarding the most effective utilization of their time.

B. Directors should delegate noncritical tasks to subordinates

within the cooperative education office. Simple, relatively noncomplex activities could be delegated to competent secretarial personnel, or other more important, time consuming activities could be delegated to coordinators in the office.

C. The time available to directors for the performance of administrative and leadership activities could be increased substantially if the director would become less involved in day-to-day student coordination activities. Directors should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of this approach for increasing the amount of time available to them.

Summary

Seventy-three two-year institutions participated in this national research study designed to determine the role of the cooperative education director in two-year colleges in the United States. Based on the data provided by these institutions, this article has presented the actual and ideal role of the two-year cooperative education director as perceived by three reference groups; the differences in role perception (actual and ideal) among directors, their immediate supervisors, and faculty; and the differences between the actual and ideal role of directors as perceived by directors. A complete copy of this research report is available from the Cooperative Education Research Center of Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts.

References

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